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### 3. OCCURRENCE OF ASIATIC BRUSHTAILED PORCUPINE *ATHERURUS MACROURUS* (LINN. 1758) AT MIZORAM, INDIA<sup>1</sup>

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The Asiatic Brushtailed Porcupine *Atherurus macrourus* is known to exist in Assam, India. Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) had recorded its distribution as Assam (India), Tenasserim (Myanmar), China, Indo-China, Thailand and Malaysia.

According to Choudhary (1997) *Atherurus macrourus assamensis*, a subspecies of the Asiatic Brushtailed Porcupine is found in India. This is also endorsed by Molur *et al.* (1998). In the CHECKLIST OF INDIAN MAMMALS, Nameer (2000) has also mentioned Assam as its known distribution limit. Thomas (1921) had described the specimen of Asiatic Brushtailed Porcupine collected from Assam by Wells, during the Mammal Survey of India. In his report, "Scientific results from the Mammal Survey", he had described it as a new species *Atherurus assamensis*. But subsequently, it was given the status of subspecies *assamensis*. Currently, the subspecies *assamensis* is also considered as a synonym of *Atherurus*

*macrourus* (Wilson and Reeder 1993). Until now, the known distribution of the species was only Assam. Recently, one of us (M. Swamlina) sent a photograph of an animal taken at Hmuifang, Aizawl, Mizoram for identification to the BNHS; where it was identified as *Atherurus macrourus*. The occurrence of *A. macrourus* in the Aizawl district of Mizoram state is a new distribution record for the species which was so far known only from Assam. Interestingly, Mizoram and Myanmar share a common boundary.

The Bombay Natural History Society's collections has a male specimen (Reg. No. 8997) of this species collected at Tenasserim, Myanmar on 20.xii.1913.

According to Blanford (1891), this species was restricted to the east of Bay of Bengal. He further states, "the genus must have existed in the Indian Peninsula, for its teeth have been found in the Pleistocene cave-deposits of Kurnool".

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### 4. PREDATION ON CHITAL *AXIS AXIS* BY WILD PIG *SUS SCROFA* IN BANDHAVGARH NATIONAL PARK<sup>1</sup>

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On April 12, 2006, while we were at Bandhavgarh National Park to estimate Tiger population, we observed a

group of six to seven Chital *Axis axis* grazing near a water hole at around 1700 hrs. A group of 12-13 Wild Pigs

*Sus scrofa* came near the same water hole. The sounder consisted of various age groups adult females, males and young ones. As the Pigs approached the Chital, one of the adult female Pig suddenly charged and caught an adult female Chital by her hind quarters. Two other adult Pigs joined in the attack and started eating the Chital that died after 15 minutes of the attack. The remaining Chital group gave warning calls, stood at some distance and

watched.

Wild Pigs are omnivorous and are known to scavenge on kills made by large carnivores (Prater 1971: THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS, BNHS). They are likely to predate on young and helpless prey as well, but attacks on adult healthy large prey are rare. This observation shows that Wild Pigs are capable of bringing down large prey and can cooperate to improve hunting success.

5. COMMENTS ON – DEBARKING OF TEAK *TECTONA GRANDIS* LINN. F. BY GAUR *BOS GAURUS* H. SMITH DURING SUMMER IN A TROPICAL DRY DECIDUOUS HABITAT OF CENTRAL INDIA BY PASHA, M. K. S., G. ARINDRAN, K.P. SANKARAN, & Q. QURESHI, 2002: *JBNHS* 99(2): 238-244<sup>1</sup>

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This article is based on an extensive research study done by the authors in Pench Tiger Reserve. The article, however, contains significant number of errors, which fall into three main categories.

#### Potentially misleading computations

The authors have used incorrect formulas to calculate areas of bark and debarked sampled teak trees (see p. 239). I fail to understand the author's logic of multiplying the area of a rectangle and/or square by a constant  $\pi$  to compute surface area of debarked portion. The calculations based on these formulas, obviously, have yielded bark and debarked areas 3.14 times than the actual areas. Thus, it is likely that proportions available to debark and utilized for debarking might give rise to spurious differences in GBH (girth at breast height) categories for preference and avoidance by Gaur (see Table 2). Consequently, it is possible that majority of preference ratings given in this table might be changed so as value of chi-square goodness of fit test ( $\chi^2$ ) given in the text (see p. 241). Further, the surface area of a cylinder is  $2\pi \times \text{radius} \times \text{height}$  (where  $\pi = 3.14$ ). Since radius of a cylinder is equal to its circumference upon  $2\pi$  (Sharma and Trivedi 2002), therefore surface area of cylinder would be circumference  $\times$  height, and not  $\pi \times \text{diameter} \times \text{height}$  as used in the analysis (see page 239).

The t values (debarked plots  $t_{61} = 365.41$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; un-debarked plot  $t_{61} = 540.3$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ) on p. 241 appear to be very high. The t value at 61 degree of freedom should be between 3.4 and 3.5, which is statistically significant at 0.001 level of significance. I hope that t values given at new level of significance ( $p < 0.0001$ ) in this article ought to be printing errors and not an expansion of the table of statistics by the authors.

The authors' present food habits of Gaur in Pench Tiger Reserve (see Table 1) as % observations (see column 3). The sum of values in this column works out to be 96.7% and not 100%.

#### Peer reviewing errors

*Prima facie*, the last line in the Introduction section (see p. 238) is inappropriate in its current position. It should have been in results as it projects field observations of the authors. At the best, this line should have been struck off, as it is re-mentioned in the discussion on p. 242. Further, Table 1 shows three grass species, whereas, in the text (results) the authors have claimed to record four grass species besides other plant biomorphs as summer food plants of the Gaur.

It is not clear anywhere in the article up to what age the authors have considered young Gaur as calves. Similarly, it is not understood from the perusal of the article as to what the authors mean by debarked and un-debarked plots (see Table 3). By debarked plots, do they mean sample plots that contained at least one tree debarked by Gaur? Also do un-debarked plots mean plots devoid of any debarked tree? Further, one fails to understand how the number of trees (931) in the available category (Table 2) exceeds actual sample size (630). Also, units of area have been left open to the reader's choice.

Significant amount of text in the article is irrelevant. For instance, "forest fire is known to affect the cambial tissue of trees ... No mortality of debarked tree was noticed as a result of low intensity forest fire" (see p. 242). How is such discussion relevant in the context of the present study, especially, when its basis does not find any place in the methods and results sections?